

IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE
IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

VOL. XXVI

DECEMBER, 1956

NO. 4



OFFICERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

President—Bruce F. Stiles, Des Moines, Iowa
Vice-President—A. Lang Baily, Davenport, Iowa
Sec'y-Treas.—Dr. Myrle M. Burk, Route 2, Waterloo, Iowa
Librarian—Dr. J. Harold Ennis, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa
Editor—Fred J. Pierce, Winthrop, Iowa

Executive Council:

Walter W. Barrett, Sioux City, Iowa
Dr. Edward L. Kozicky, Ames, Iowa
Miss C. Esther Copp, Wheatland, Iowa
Miss Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

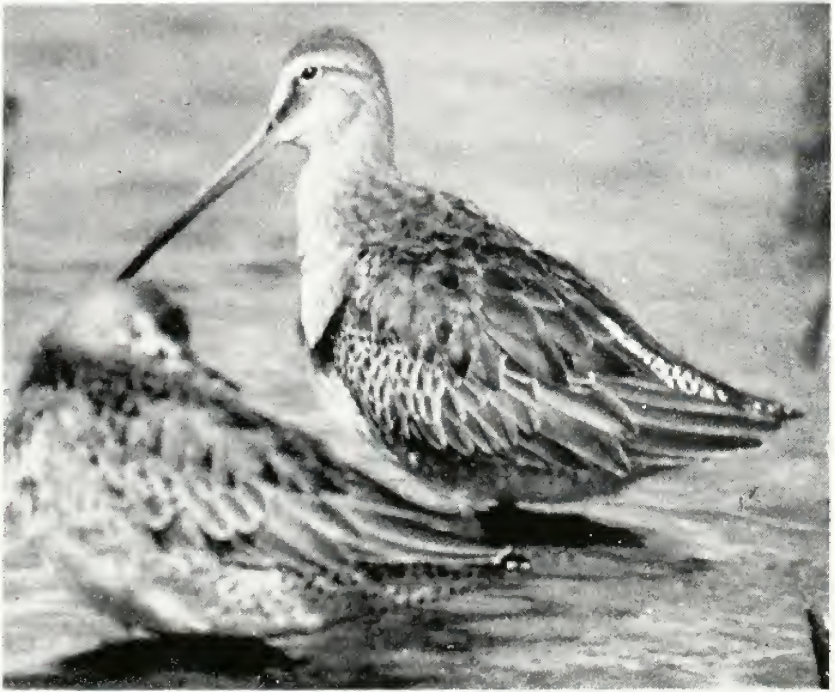
The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publications of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; "The Bulletin," 1929-1930; "Iowa Bird Life," beginning 1931.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$2.00 a year. Single copies 50c each. Subscription to the magazine is included in all paid memberships, of which there are four classes, as follows: Contributing Member, \$10.00 a year; Supporting Member, \$5.00 a year; Regular Member, \$2.00 a year; Junior Member (under 16 years of age), \$1.00 a year.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE
WINTHROP, IOWA

Entered as second-class matter February 9, 1932, at the post office at Winthrop Iowa, under the Act of March 3, 1879.



CLOSE-UPS OF DOWITCHERS ON A CANADIAN LAKE

SEPTEMBER IN SASKATCHEWAN

By FRED W. KENT

302 Richards St.
IOWA CITY, IOWA

(With photographs by the author)

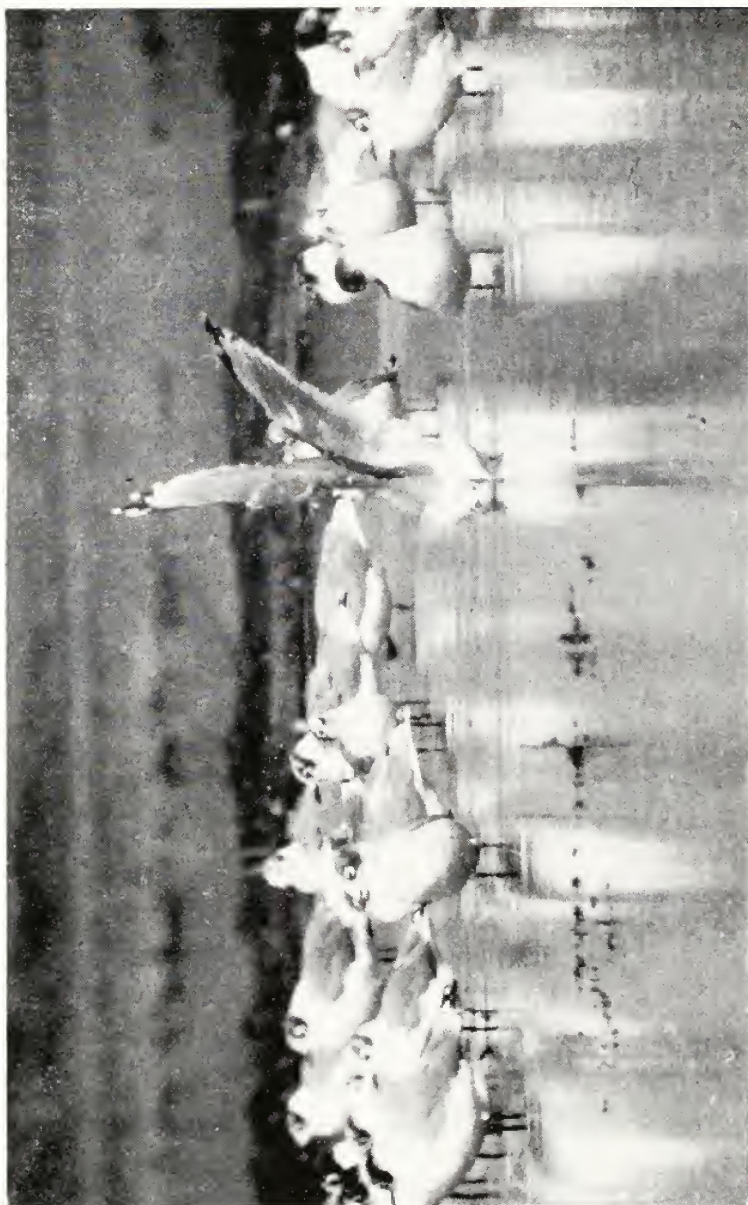
Since about half the birds we see in Iowa are migrants and are seen only briefly as they pass through the state, we have little chance to get acquainted with them—so when I had a chance to go into the "Prairie Provinces" in the fall of 1956 I anticipated seeing some familiar birds in a different habitat.

We drove through western Minnesota, North Dakota, southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, a quick trip in mid-September, to spend several days on the narrow lakes of the Qu'Appelle River valley, a surprising indentation in that vast, flat, wheat country, where the harvest was only half completed.

Of course, there were many species as common there as here—such as Meadowlarks, Crows, Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows, but there were others quite common there which we see rarely, or but briefly in migration. Of these the Franklin's Gulls were most conspicuous. We saw a few in Iowa in the spring (a dozen or two at Amana Lake), but in the north they were the most numerous birds we saw. Large flocks of them across North Dakota in late afternoon swarmed over the fields and roadsides, like swallows, flying back and forth. We saw thousands at the lakes where we stayed.



QU'APPELLE RIVER VALLEY AND LAKES

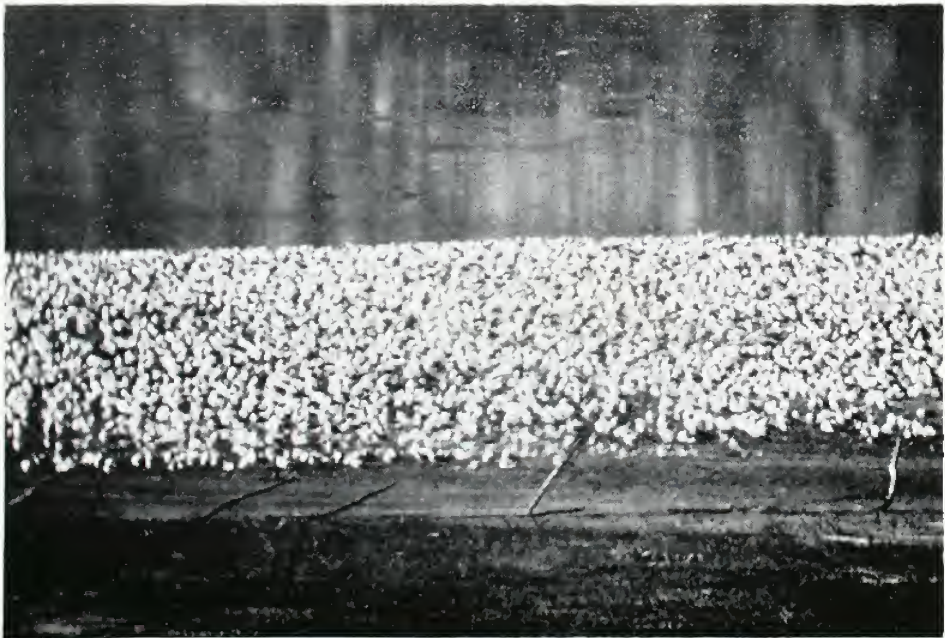


AMONG THE NUMEROUS GULLS, THE FRANKLIN'S WERE ALWAYS MOST CONSPICUOUS

I can appreciate the description by Thomas S. Roberts: "Countless thousands, it seems millions, of Gulls gather there from far and wide and, making the middle of the lake their roosting-place at night, forage for miles and miles over the surrounding country during the day. The going-out of the Gulls, as they bestir themselves at sunrise and leave the lake in great, shimmering and whirling flocks, and the home-coming, as evening approaches, of great undulating lines or V-shaped formations with long, waving streamers, furnish one of the most wonderful and fascinating sights of fall bird-life on our western prairies. For two hours the evening flight goes steadily on, the horizon yielding flock after flock until darkness, only, brings an end . . ." (Birds of Minnesota, 1932, Vol. 1, pp. 550-551).

There were many ducks on the lakes but not in large migratory flocks or rafts as we see them in Iowa in the fall. They were in scattered small groups on the lake, and in greater numbers in the marshy areas where they would keep rising ahead of me as I pushed the canoe along. A bit surprising to me, the big ducks were nearly all Canvas-backs, with only a few Mallards, Pintails and Gadwalls. These, with the Blue-winged Teal, formed the bulk of the duck population, although I saw an occasional Redhead, Scaup, Baldpate and small separated groups of Ruddy ducks; almost all were in the eclipse plumage.

Always somewhere in sight were grebes—Pied-billed, Eared and Western. Not being familiar with the Eared Grebe, I found them difficult to identify, especially in the winter garb. The Westerns were easy, however, and one of these with two young, always begging, stayed directly in front of our camp all the time we were there. There was usually a Pelican or two in sight of camp also, with more flying up and down the lake in their surprisingly easy and graceful flight.



AS DESCRIBED BY ROBERTS, "... A VAST CONCOURSE OF GULLS CLOSELY
MASSSED TOGETHER ... "

Our isolated camp was 15 miles uplake from the small town of Fort Qu'Appelle, so I spent much of the time in a canoe, exploring the shores and marshes. One day when the canoe grounded on a mud flat out in the lake I was soon surrounded by about 200 Dowitchers, twittering melodiously as they fed—quite unconcerned about me as I took pictures. Some preened while others slept, with the nictitating membrane closed. All were in the gray plumage. At the lake also were a few Ring-billed Gulls, Common Terns, Yellow-legs, Kingfishers, Myrtle Warblers and others, but I had the feeling that many of the birds had gone—a feeling perhaps accentuated by the brilliant fall coloring and the frosty early morning air.

Enroute across Canada, to make up the 51 species I saw, were small flocks of Brewer's Blackbirds, a few Magpies, a Red-tailed Hawk or two but more often Marsh Hawks, and in the many "pot-holes" in the wheatfields and along the roadsides always a few Teal, sometimes Coots or a few Shovellers. Especially attractive to us were these many clear, well-filled water holes, when this year our own ponds were all dried up.

ECOLOGY OF THE SORA IN CLAY COUNTY, IOWA

By WARD D. TANNER, JR. and GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON

Dept. of Zoology & Entomology
Iowa State College
AMES, IOWA

At Dewey's Pasture Public Shooting Ground, Clay County, Iowa, rail ecology was studied from April to September, 1951, from April to October, 1952, and in April, 1953. For results of Virginia Rail and King Rail studies with descriptions of the area and study methods see Tanner and Hendrickson (1954, 1956).

The earliest date of Sora Rail arrival in 1951 was April 30, and the latest sight record was September 27, 1952. The peaks of the 1951 spring migration came in the first week of May and on May 10. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) recorded the first arrival of the Sora April 28, 1949; May 4, 1950; and April 23, 1951, in Ramsey County, Minn. In 83 hours of observation, April 30 to May 23, 1951, Soras were seen 142 times, Virginia Rails 102 times and King Rails 11 times.

The 1951 nesting season of 45 days extended from the laying of the first egg on May 13 to the hatching of the last young June 26. The Sora laid about an egg a day and began incubation usually three or more days before the last egg was laid. Egg-laying began at the majority of nests in the second and third weeks of May, 1951, probably. In 1952 the first egg was laid by May 7. Billard (1947) in Connecticut found that the nesting season extended from May 21 until July 3, and Walkinshaw (1940) reported the earliest nesting date for the Sora in Michigan was May 2 and the latest July 10.

As nests of the Sora and the Virginia Rail were so nearly alike that it was impossible to distinguish between them accurately without the birds or eggs, 44 inactive nests were ascribable to either species. The basket-like Sora nests, suspended just above the water surface from stems of emergent plants or hidden within tussocks of grass or edge in shallow water, were constructed of only the one to three species of plants available at the nest site. Lake sedge and river bulrush were most often used as nest material, and tussock sedge, cat-tail, hard-stemmed bulrush, bur-reed and cordgrass occasionally.

Of 35 occupied nests seen in the two years of study, 25 were in lake sedge communities, four in river bulrush, three in hard-stemmed bulrush, one in

cat-tail and two in bur-reed. Further, 23 were supported by and anchored to lake sedge, four to river bulrush, three to hard-stemmed bulrush, one to cat-tail, one to bur-reed, two to cordgrass and one to tussock sedge. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) found the Sora nesting more frequently in cat-tail than in other types of vegetation. Walkinshaw (1940) noted 12 to 13 nests on a cat-tail marsh in the sedge border rather than in the cat-tail.

At 26 occupied Sora nests in 1951 the mean average water depth was 12.8 ± 0.7 inches ranging from 5 to 20 inches with a standard deviation of 3.4 inches. In 1952, at six nests the mean depth was 18.9 ± 1.6 inches, R. 13-23, S.D. 3.7. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) found a mean water depth of 8.5 inches, R. 7-16.3, at 52 Sora nests.

In 1951, the mean number of eggs in 18 Sora nests containing full complements was 10.2 ± 0.4 , R. 5-12, S.D. 1.8. In 1952, the mean number of eggs in six complete clutches was 9.5 ± 0.3 , R. 9-11, S.D. 0.8. Billard (1947) found a mean of 11.7 eggs, R.8-15, in nine nests, while Walkinshaw (1940) observed a mean of 9.4 eggs, R.6-13, in 39 nests. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) noted a mean of 9.5 eggs, R.6-12, in 16 nests in 1950, and in 1951 a mean of 10.4 eggs, R.8-14, in 13 nests.

Incubation periods were estimated by noting the time-lapse between the laying of the last egg to the hatching of the last young in those nests in which all the eggs hatched. The incubation period in four Sora nests was 19 days and in a fifth nest 20 days. In 1951, hatching occurred from June 1 to June 26. In the majority of nests hatching began during the second week of June. Because incubation started only a few days after the laying of the first egg, the eggs hatched at near the rate of laying, or about one a day. Hence, hatching in individual nests spanned about a week. In most of the nests hatching was completed between June 11 and June 20.

Of 26 Sora nests 15 were successful in producing at least one young in 1951, when 126 of the 228 eggs hatched. Of the 102 other eggs 50 in six nests were destroyed by small birds, 16 in three nests by raccoons, 15 in two nests by flood, and 10 in one nest by an unidentified mammal, 7 eggs in one nest were deserted and an egg in each of four nests was rated infertile.

Adult Soras were not seen at a nest during the incubation period, except rarely at hatching time. Probably, the incubating parent slipped quietly away at the observer's approach, for the eggs nearly always were found to be warm. When a nest was visited while eggs were hatching, the parents, usually hidden in the vegetation 10 or more feet from the nest, disclosed their presence only by uttering an occasional low call. As the oldest juveniles seen with adults were still clothed in natal down, probably parental care of the offspring ceased by the time the young had attained the power of flight. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) believed that the young Soras became capable of self-feeding within the first week after hatching and that the period of parental care was rather short.

In all, 129 Soras were captured, banded and released. The 44 trapped in 1951 included 11 young in natal down and termed downy young, 9 medium-sized juveniles past the downy stage and incapable of flight, 17 large juveniles capable of flight, and 7 adults. The 85 Soras captured in 1952 included 10 downy young, 23 medium-sized juveniles, 44 large juveniles, and 8 adults. In 1951, 82 per cent of the captured downy young were taken in the first week of July, the latest July 8. In 1952, 70 per cent of the downy young were captured during the last week of June, the latest July 23. In 1951, the first medium-sized juvenile was trapped June 30, 29 days after the earliest recorded date of hatching, and 44 per cent in the last week of July, about five weeks after hatching was completed in the majority of nests under ob-

servation, the latest July 26, 1951. In 1952, the first medium-sized juvenile was taken June 24, 30 per cent after July 6, and the latest July 25. In 1951, the first large juveniles were taken July 20, seven weeks after the earliest date of hatching. The weekly catch was none to four from the last week of July through September 20, without a peak period. The latest large juvenile was trapped September 16 in both years. In 1952, the earliest large juvenile was taken July 3, and 23 per cent were caught during the third week of August.

Since broods of Soras were seen only when in traps and few banded Soras were recaptured, data concerning their movements were meager. Six downy young were retaken at places within a 100-yard radius of the original banding site. Six medium-sized juveniles were recaptured at the original site of capture and one at a point 101-200 yards distant. Of 10 large juveniles, five were retrapped at the original site of capture, four 101-200 yards away from the original site and one 201-300 yards distant. A single adult was retaken at the original banding site.

A molting adult Sora, trapped September 1, 1951, had its new primary wing feathers still sheathed for a distance of about an inch. By the end of June, a few young Soras had lost the black natal down and had begun to acquire the olive-buff juvenal plumage. By July 3, an occasional juvenile Sora in full juvenal plumage was seen, and by the first week of August all were fully fledged. The young began to molt their juvenal plumage in July and by September many resembled adults.

The distances between rail nests were rather great, probably because the resident rail population was small. The least distance between occupied Sora nests was 50 feet, between occupied nests of the Virginia Rail and Sora 56 feet, and between occupied nests of the Sora and King Rail 102 feet. Workers in other regions have found rails nesting closer, as Billard (1947) found Virginia Rails nesting within a 15-foot radius of Sora nests, and Pospichal and Marshall (1954) found some Sora nests only 10 feet apart.

In 1951, 26 occupied nests of the Sora, a nest per 3.1 acres, were discovered on the 81.4 acres of habitable marsh. Of the 28 marshes, 17 contained Sora nests in that year. The highest nesting density on any marsh was a nest per 0.3 acre on a marsh of that area. In 1952, when 10 of the marshes were examined, nine occupied nests, a nest per 2.9 acres, were found on the 26.5 acres of habitable cover. Since all nine of these nests were on a 10-acre marsh, the highest nesting density in that year on a single marsh was a nest per 1.1 acres. Beecher (1942) found 54 occupied nests, a nest per 1.8 acres, on 96.15 acres of marsh bordering Pistakee Lake in northern Illinois. Billard (1947) found seven Sora nests, a nest per 2.9 acres, on a 20-acre marsh supporting communities of broad-leaved and narrow-leaved cat-tails, and seven nests, a nest per 0.7 acre, on a 5-acre marsh with stands of reed canary grass, sweet flag, bur-reed and cat-tail.

If it be assumed that all the nests on the research area in 1951 were discovered and no re-nesting occurred, the number of breeding adults, considered monogamous, was twice the number of nests, or 52 birds. Productivity could be reckoned only to the time of hatching, since it was impossible to count the young birds after they had left the nest. In the 15 successful nests, of 1951 an estimated 135 young hatched, or an average of nine juveniles per successful nest and 1.7 per acre of habitat. No evidence of mortality among young or adults was seen.

The mean weight of 18 adults was 81.1 ± 2.7 grams, $R.66.9 - 101.5$, S.D. 11.6, or about 2.8 ounces.

In summary, on Dewey's Pasture Public Shooting Ground of 402 acres with 28 small marshes, Clay County, Iowa, 15 adult and 114 juvenile Soras were banded and released, 1951 and 1952. The earliest arrival date was April 30, 1951, and the latest sight record September 27, 1952. Spring migrants, 1951, arrived largely May 1-7 and on May 10. On 107 acres of cover searched 35 occupied nests were in lake sedge and river bulrush, primarily. Of 228 eggs in 26 nests, 1951, 126 hatched June 1-26. In 24 complete clutches of both years were 241 eggs, about 10 in a clutch. The estimated time of incubation in four nests was 19 days, and in a fifth 20 days. A probable 135 young hatched from 15 successful nests, 1951, about 1.7 per acre on 81.4 acres of suitable cover.

LITERATURE CITED

- Beecher, William J. 1942. Nesting birds and the vegetation substrate. Chicago Ornithological Society, Chicago.
- Billard, Ruth S. 1947. An ecological study of the Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola limicola*) and the Sora (*Porzana carolina*) in some Connecticut swamps. M.S. thesis. Ia. St. Coll. Library, Ames, Iowa.
- Pospichal, Leo B., and William H. Marshall. 1954. A field study of Sora Rail and Virginia Rail in central Minnesota. Flicker, 26:2-32.
- Roberts, Thomas S. 1932. Birds of Minnesota. Univ. of Minn. Press, Minneapolis.
- Tanner, Ward D., and George O. Hendrickson. 1954. Ecology of the Virginia Rail in Clay County, Iowa. Iowa Bird Life, 24:65-70.
- . 1956. Ecology of the King Rail in Clay County, Iowa. Iowa Bird Life, 26:54-56.
- Walkinshaw, Lawrence H. 1940. Summer life of the Sora Rail. Auk 57:153-168.

TWENTY ACRES—A WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN BLACK HAWK COUNTY

By MYRLE M. BURK

Route 2
WATERLOO, IOWA

One mile east of the center of Bennington Township, Black Hawk County, Iowa, a high bridge spans a small creek. To the south stretch 20 acres of low prairie through which Crane Creek winds from northwest to southeast. Trees and shrubs cover most of the area; marsh and blue grass occur in the open spaces. This is the Wildlife Sanctuary, owned by Donald Sage and entrusted to the Waterloo Audubon Society for planting, study, and use for conservation education. It is 5 miles north and 6 miles east of the city of Waterloo.

Ecologically, it is low prairie; locally, it is called "creek bottom". However, it is not a level or flat piece of land. A large part has sufficient drainage and soil fertility to support the growth of bluegrass. Marshy waterways drain to the creek from both east and west; sedges and slough-grass (*Spartina pectinata* Link.) are here dominant. The winding creek cuts its bed through bank and marsh, gouging the soil from a steep bank or flooding low areas which are covered with a thick growth of sand-bar willow and false indigo, a natural hideout for Sora Rail and other shore-birds.

On this land, never plowed but previously grazed, native species other than grasses and sedges are few. Goldenrod, aster, helianthus, false indigo, dogwood, smooth wild rose, milkweeds and aspen occur commonly. Other native plants, have not become re-established.

Mr. Sage initiated the development of the sanctuary soon after he acquired the property. He planted trees over much of the area. These included elm, silver maple, willow, poplar and green ash. In spite of depredations by pocket gophers, many grew and have reached sufficient size to be attractive to migrating birds and nesting residents.

During the past dry years, the stream of Crane Creek has been narrow and shallow, although some deep holes occur. The plant and animal life it shelters is still uninvestigated. Incidentally, this statement may apply to all phases of plant and animal life in this area.

Members of the society have made sporadic attempts to preserve here our rapidly vanishing native flora, especially those plants with flowers of grace and beauty. Thus far seeds and plants taken from the few remaining spots of native vegetation and planted in the sanctuary have not been successfully grown. Unfortunately, in this region of fertile and valuable land, many "wild flowers" now exist only in the memories of a few people; to the children they are non-existent. The thoughtless destruction of an heritage of such beauty and value is shameful. The rapid drainage of swamps and sloughs of this region for agricultural purposes should alert interest and activity in the preservation of remaining species. The white lady's slipper no longer grows in clumps on the sandy loam; the white-fringed orchid no longer waves its white plume above the slough grasses and sedges; and the fragrant ladies' tresses, lovely flower of late summer, is not found. Others which are seldom or no longer seen are camas (*Zygadenus elegans* Pursh.), the bunch-flower (*Melanthium virginicum* L.), the ague-plant (*Gentiana quinquefolia* L.) a medicinal herb of pioneers, purple gerardia (*Gerardia purpurea* L.) and grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia glauca* Raf.)

Unless interest in preservation is soon jolted into activity, these plants too will become rare or absent from our flora: shooting star (*Dodocatheon meadia* L.), blue flag (*Iris versicolor* L.), smooth-leaved aster (*Aster laevis*



SCENE IN BLACK HAWK COUNTY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Looking south from the bridge. Pond lies south of tree line. Photograph by Jack Heifner, 1953.

L.), marsh marigold (*Caltha Palustris* L.), cardinal-flower (*Lobelia cardinalis* L.), sweet-scented northern bed-straw (*Galium boreale* L.), meadow phlox (*Phlox maculata* L.), compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum* L.), and the gentians, the lobelias, the stately prairie grass such as blue stem, turkey-foot and Indian grass. Many are being destroyed by indiscriminate roadside spraying. The list is long, yet growing among these attractive plants are more than 300 other species, not so conspicuous but just as interesting. These too will vanish.

The Waterloo Audubon Society, as part of its program, aims to more systematically preserve native prairie plants of this area during the next year.

Three years ago attempts were made to lure the Bluebird to nest in the sanctuary. Seven Bluebird nesting-boxes were nailed to posts and placed at intervals throughout the area. No Bluebirds accepted the invitation in 1954; one pair chose a nesting-box in 1955; in 1956 no Bluebirds came back.

In the spring of 1956, 1000 multiflora roses were planted to form a hedge along the highway and as a boundary to an adjacent farm. Honeysuckle, wild grape, red pine, dogwood, elderberry and other woody species were also planted. In spite of an unfavorably hot and dry summer, many grew. Pocket gophers, working among the multiflora roses, caused some damage.

The members of the Waterloo Audubon Society are fortunate to have this large area which may be used for study, investigation, and recreation. The ultimate aim is that this sanctuary may be a center for conservation education.

Following are lists of the birds seen for the first time at the Wildlife Sanctuary. The lists were made by Russell Hays and cover the years 1954, 1955 and 1956. These lists indicate that with growth of the trees, shrubs, and other plants, the sanctuary is becoming more and more attractive to birds.

1954—Pied-billed Grebe, Snow Goose, Blue Goose, Wood Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Harlan's Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, Brown Creeper, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Starling, English Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Lapland Longspur.

1955—Blue-winged Teal, Marsh Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sora Rail, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellow-legs, Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Flicker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Prairie Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Crow, Bluebird, Yellow Warbler, Northern Yellow-throat, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Bronzed Grackle, Cowbird, Goldfinch.

1956—Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Bittern, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Shoveller, Lesser Scaup, American Goldeneye, Coot, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Hummingbird, Least Flycatcher, Rough-winged Swallow, Blue Jay, Chickadee, Prairie Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Myrtle Warbler, Dickcissel, Red-eyed Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Leconte's Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Harris's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow.

(A small pond at the south edge of the sanctuary, but not within the 20 acres, attracted the ducks and geese. They are also seen on Crane Creek).

BIRD RECORDS IN IOWA, 1956

By PAUL D. KLINE

Game Biologist
State Conservation Commission
VINTON, IOWA

Average bird enthusiasts the country over anticipate each new year with hope and expectation of seeing something new or unusual in the world of birds. For us in Benton County, Iowa, 1956 was most liberal with bird thrills. Several unusual occurrences are herein recorded.

May, with its surge of migrating birds, is in the opinion of many the finest month of all. Not the least attraction of May is the push of northbound warblers.

May 10 seemed to be the date when warblers first appeared in numbers in Benton County. On that date Magnolia and Blackburnian warblers were first seen. During the following day, May 11, Redstarts, Parula, Chestnut-sided, and Wilson's Warblers were observed. However, the day's biggest moment came when a Worm-eating Warbler was seen north of Vinton in the Dudgeon Lake area. Flitting about among the undergrowth of hawthorn, the bird was observed for a minute, then lost.

Other warblers not indigenous to Benton County but none-the-less found there in 1956 were: Yellow-breasted Chat, seen May 7 near the bridge over the Cedar River commonly known as the Mt. Auburn bridge; a male Prothonotary Warbler May 15, on the Cedar River bank north of Vinton; and a pair of Louisiana Water-thrushes, at a location east of Vinton called the "Benton City Area." The Water-thrushes inhabited the 8-foot high, precipitous banks of a small creek near its juncture with the Cedar River. First observed July 8, their behavior indicated they were nesting somewhere in the near vicinity. These birds were observed several times in the same locale through July and August before they disappeared.

May yielded two records of Pileated Woodpeckers in Benton County. One was seen on the 11th in the Dudgeon Lake area; the other on the 22nd over the Iowa River south of Belle Plaine.

On a small pond about 7 miles north of Vinton and west of the river, both Wilson's and Northern Phalaropes were recorded the same day, May 7. A group of five of the Wilson's species were separated from the larger group of fast-moving, spinning Northern species.

A Least Tern, feeding over the Cedar River just north of Vinton, was seen on June 10. The bird passed up and down river before the observation point for several minutes, then disappeared.

On October 1, a Harlan's Hawk was seen near the Mt. Auburn bridge. The hawk first swooped low over an extensive woodland, circled progressively higher, then moved south with the wind.

One sight record worthy of note but from Mills County was a male Blue Grosbeak, seen June 15. The bird was first spotted while perched on a telephone wire along a road at the edge of the Missouri River bluffs south of Glenwood. He flew several times back and forth from a farm yard, an adjacent cornfield, and the telephone wires, while watched by myself and a companion, Conservation Officer Chris Hein of Glenwood, Iowa. Although we searched more than an hour through vines and shrubbery in the farm yard and extensive elderberry thickets along the roadside, we found no nest. The male was not singing but seemed prone to stay in the vicinity.

Bird-nesting records obtained included one for the Broad-winged Hawk in the Palisades-Kepler State Park, Linn County. The nest was placed about

40 feet up in a crotch between the trunk and the first two limbs of a white oak of about 16 inches d.b.h. Located in dense upland timber of white oak, shagbark hickory, linden, black maple, and ironwood, and on a northwest aspect, the nest fell somewhat below the general forest canopy. Although I could not climb the tree, an adjacent one was climbed to a height sufficient to look down into the nest. It contained two eggs and a few green leaves. Both adults were observed about the nest at very close range.

Ordinarily, finding a Blue Jay nest is nothing to be excited about. However, one located in the "Benton City Area" of Benton County on June 5 this past summer was unusual in that it was placed upon the ground. The site was a road-cut about 15 feet high. The Blue Jay nest rested on a ledge about 20 inches below the top and was braced by a tree root. It contained three, almost fully fledged young. On the bank immediately over the nest was a white oak tree of about 18 inches d.b.h. Considerable fine nesting timber could be found all about the locale. White and black oaks, white walnuts, and shagbark hickories should have provided numerous suitable sites for nesting Blue Jays.

SPRING AND SUMMER SIGHT RECORDS FROM CASS AND POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTIES IN 1956

By DENNIS L. CARTER

Dept. of Zoology & Entomology
Iowa State College
AMES, IOWA

While engaged in research work on the Mourning Dove at Lewis, Cass County, Iowa, from March 22 to September 22, 1956, I obtained several interesting records and saw 185 species of birds in Cass and Pottawattamie counties. Most of the observations were made in the vicinity of Lewis, but I also covered roadside routes which were located northwest and southwest of Lewis and which extended into Pottawattamie County. Certain other areas in Pottawattamie County were also visited occasionally. Of the species seen, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit, Sanderling, Bonaparte's Gull, Least Tern, and Red Crossbill are not listed for southwest Iowa in "The Iowa Distributional Checklist" (Iowa Bird Life, Vol. XXIV, No. 4). Separate lists of the more noteworthy records for each of the two counties are given.

Observations in Cass County were confined to Cass, Pleasant, and Washington townships, and a total of 169 species was recorded for the county. The town of Lewis and localities north and south of town were found to be good places in which to observe land birds. The lake at Cold Springs State Park, south of Lewis, attracted a surprising variety of water birds during the spring migration.

Eared Grebe. One in winter plumage was at Cold Springs April 4, and individuals in breeding plumage were seen there April 20 and May 4 and 5. Least Bittern. One at Cold Springs August 10.

Red-breasted Merganser. Six at Cold Springs April 12.

Swainson's Hawk. A pair was found at a nest in a cottonwood tree in Section 31 of Pleasant Township April 14. They had been seen in the locality for about a week before they were positively identified on this date. They were observed in the nest tree repeatedly until August 24. An immature bird was first noted July 30 and was frequently seen with the adults after that. Hawks of this species were occasionally seen along roadsides in Washington Township where one was last recorded August 30.

Osprey. Individuals were noted at Cold Springs April 24 and 28 and May 2 and 23. Two were observed there May 4.

Upland Plover. One was seen in a pasture in Pleasant Township August 9 and 14.

Willet. One at Cold Springs April 28 and 30 and May 2. One at the Cocklin Fish Farm north of Griswold April 28.

Stilt Sandpiper. Three at Cold Springs May 14.

Hudsonian Godwit. One at Cold Springs May 14.

Western Kingbird. Uncommon summer resident. Two pairs were noted.

Bewick's Wren. A pair of these birds was found in the southwest part of Lewis April 10. They were seen carrying nesting material, and the male was heard singing after that, but they were not seen after April 27.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Two were seen in a wooded area south of Lewis May 30.

Bell's Vireo. Common summer resident. At least 5 pairs were present in Lewis.

Mourning Warbler. A male was found along the East Nishnabotna River southwest of Lewis June 17.

Orchard Oriole. Common summer resident, first seen May 9.

Red Crossbill. Eleven in the Lewis Cemetery March 30 and two at the Cocklin Fish Farm April 10.

Towhee. The Spotted (Arctic) Towhee was first seen April 13 and was common from April 26 to May 12. The Red-eyed Towhee arrived April 28 and remained as a summer resident. The two towhees were seen together in the field and were readily distinguishable.

Lark Sparrow. Fairly common summer resident. A nest with four young was found at the Lewis Cemetery July 11.

Lincoln's Sparrow. Abundant migrant. It was present from April 4 to May 23 and returned September 17.

In Pottawattamie County, observations were made regularly in Lincoln, Waveland, and Wright townships on the eastern edge of the county. In addition, during the spring migration, four trips were made to Lake Manawa in Lewis Township on the Missouri River. On the April 29 trip to Lake Manawa, I was accompanied by Peter C. Petersen, Jr. Dale Birkenholz and I found a remarkable concentration of birds at Lake Manawa on May 6, including several hundred shore-birds. A total of 151 species of birds was recorded for Pottawattamie County.

Eared Grebe. Six were counted on Lake Manawa April 29.

Western Grebe. One on Lake Manawa May 6.

Swainson's Hawk. This species was occasionally seen along roadsides in the eastern part of the county, and a pair was found at a nest in Section 15 of Lincoln Township April 19. However, the hawks were not seen in the vicinity of this nest after April 28.

Piping Plover. Two at Lake Manawa May 13.

Black-bellied Plover. Two at Lake Manawa May 13.

Willet. Three at Lake Manawa May 6 and a flock of 24 on May 13.

Stilt Sandpiper. Three at Lake Manawa May 6 and at least 92 on May 13.

Marbled Godwit. Four at Lake Manawa May 6.

Hudsonian Godwit. Five at Lake Manawa May 6 and two May 13.

Sanderling. One in winter plumage was at Lake Manawa May 6.

Avocet. Two at Lake Manawa May 6 and three May 13.

Bonaparte's Gull. At least eight were seen with Franklin's gulls at Lake Manawa May 6.

Least Tern. Four at Lake Manawa May 27.

Carolina Wren. On August 25, one was found along the East Nishnabotna River in Section 25 of Waveland Township.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. One was seen at Camp Wakonda (Wright Township, Section 36) on June 3.

Bay-breasted Warbler. A male was seen at Lake Manawa May 13.

Kentucky Warbler. At Camp Wakonda, a bird of this species was heard and seen June 3.

Connecticut Warbler. One was watched at close range June 3 at Camp Wakonda, and the white eye-ring was noted.

GENERAL NOTES

Little Blue Herons in Marion County.—On August 4, 1956, Walter Harrison and I took a boat trip down the Des Moines River in Marion County, south of Prairie City. On a 4-mile stretch of the river we observed six Little Blue Herons (all immatures) and eight Least Terns. On two occasions the Little Blues were in company with American Egrets and Great Blue Herons. We observed one individual for approximately five minutes from a distance of 30 yards. The Least Terns were in one group of three and another group of five individuals. On August 18, Dennis Carter and I made the same trip. One Little Blue Heron was observed on this trip.—DALE BIRKENHOLZ, Prairie City, Iowa.

A Bird Trip to Lansing.—On July 21-22, 1956, five members of the Tri-City Bird Club went to the Lansing, Iowa, region to search for Duck Hawk nests. The group included Lewis Blevins, Clark Ehlers, Edwin Meyer, Dennis Sheets and I. We saw no Duck Hawks, probably due to the late date. We talked with many people, and feel sure that at least two pairs nested in that area last summer. One nest was about 2 miles north of Waukon Junction. A farmer living near by noted the birds almost daily until highway construction was begun in mid-June. It seems very likely that the birds deserted when the blasting was begun at the base of their nesting cliff. The other nesting site, a cliff just behind the power plant southeast of Lansing, was less disturbed, and it appears those birds were successful. We noted the following birds on this trip: a brood of six Mallards, eight or more Turkey Vultures, 16 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and one Orchard Oriole.—PETER C. PETERSEN, JR., 620 East 30th St., Davenport, Iowa.

Bird Notes from Cedar Falls.—It took me several days in October to find the cause of a very noisy commotion at my sunflower feeder, which hangs near the suet feeder. The suet feeder was very frequently visited by Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and upon seeing a Red-bellied Woodpecker in the vicinity, I presumed that he was attracted to the suet also. But on the morning of October 17, I observed the Red-belly feeding from the sunflower feeder, much to the consternation of the chickadees and nuthatches. He evidently helped himself to several at a time, for he would fly to a neighboring walnut, peck at a crevice in the bark, take one hop around, shell out the sunflower, and then hop back to his store in the crevice. My sunflower feeder is fixed with an aluminum pie pan under the perches so that less seed is scattered on the ground. This makes a perfect perch for the Red-bellied Woodpecker.

In January, 1954, I caught and banded a one-legged male Cardinal. His left leg was normal but the right leg was off just a short distance below the feathers; it was larger than a normal leg and was heavily calloused on the end. I have retaken this bird three times, which has given me a chance to



WHITE PELICAN ON CEDAR LAKE, CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA
Photographed by Bill Jack Rodgers.

check his band and to note the condition of both legs. We have seen him around all summer with his family. My children named him "Happy."

In 1955 I trapped a White-throated Sparrow that had a piece of grass wrapped around one of its middle toes. I removed the grass when I banded the bird. Five days later I retrapped the bird and found that it had lost the toe.

On September 22, 1956, a group of Girl Scouts hiked to my home to do some bird study. On their way here they picked up the body of a small bird that had probably flown into a car. We were surprised to find that it was a Black-throated Blue Warbler. The identification was later confirmed by Dr. Martin L. Grant. It is fortunate that the girls brought the bird in after picking it up, and it is an example of the interest that has been aroused in this area through the work of scout leaders.—MRS. WILLIAM T. MARTIN, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

White Pelican in Cedar Rapids.—We were fortunate to have an unusual visitor in our city in the fall of 1956. On September 28, a White Pelican was seen by Dr. Alfred Meyer. It was flying over the Coe College campus on its way to Cedar Lake, about two blocks away. It soon became the center of attraction, especially after its picture was featured on the front page of the Cedar Rapids "Gazette" the day after its arrival (photograph by Bill Jack Rodgers and as printed on the opposite page here). Bird Club members, students, out-of-town and local families visited the lake to see the Pelican. The bird did not frighten easily so many people observed it. Occasionally this rare visitor flew to the bayous of the Cedar River northwest of the lake, and on one occasion Dr. Robert Vane and I saw it on the river in downtown Cedar Rapids. The bird stayed with us for three weeks; the last date that I saw it was October 19. This is the first record of the White Pelican in this city in the 27-year history of the Cedar Rapids Bird Club.—LILLIAN SERBOUSEK, 1226 Second St. S.W., Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Hawk Flights.—Again during the past fall I had the pleasure of watching the hawk flight at Duluth, Minnesota. The dates were September 15 and 16, and we had better success than last year. The hawks flew lower down and in nearer the hills, instead of over the lake; wind conditions on the first day were unfavorable, according to Dr. Hofslund, and we saw few hawks. On the second day we saw many. On two occasions Sharp-shins almost hit me as they came swooping up the valley and over the hills. One was pursuing a small bird. Another Sharp-shin chased a Flicker out over the valley; it seemed to be gaining on the Flicker when it quit the chase. Vultures came down the valley and gave us fine views. Several Ospreys were seen as well as two Ravens. Sharp-shins and Broad-wings were most numerous, but we saw Red-tailed, Cooper's, Pigeon, Sparrow, and one Duck Hawk which chose the moment of being over us to go into a thrilling stoop. Many persons were on the bluffs to witness the hawk flight, and there seemed to be much interest among the youngsters. At one time I counted 13 cars on the bluff.

Back home, on October 1, I saw three hawks go over while I was waiting for a bus. I went home for my glasses and in the next half hour I saw nine Broad-winged, two Sharp-shinned, one Cooper's, one Red-shouldered, two Red-tailed, one Sparrow, and one Swainson's. This was apparently a part of a hawk flight in progress that day.—RUSSELL M. HAYS, 825 Franklin St., Waterloo, Iowa.

Avocet in Hamilton County.—During 1956 two records for the Avocet were obtained at Little Wall Lake south of Jewell. On April 15, Dale Birkenholz and John Wisch found one of these birds at the southwest corner of the lake. It was lying down when they first saw it, but it stood up when they approached, and they had an excellent view of it. On November 9, Peter C. Petersen, Jr., and I were amazed to find an Avocet at the lake. It was standing near shore at the southwest corner, in a somewhat different position from the April bird due to the receding water-level. When we flushed the bird it flew to the northwest shore where we saw it again a little later. We noted all field marks.—DENNIS L. CARTER, Dept. of Zoology & Entomology, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

Swainson's Hawk Breeding in Scott County.—On June 8, 1956, Edwin E. Meyer and I were photographing a Sparrow Hawk nest neah the Wapsipinicon River, 2 miles east of Dixon, Iowa. While Meyer photographed the Sparrow Hawk I decided to look into the timbered area along the river. After an hour's walk I found what appeared to be a Red-tailed Hawk nest some 60 feet high in a yellow birch (*Betula lutea*). From the ground, a few small feathers caught in the sticks of the nest indicated the nest was in use. Climbing the tree, I found the nest had apparently been used for several seasons. The nest itself was about 3 feet in diameter. It contained three eggs which appeared to be well incubated. On this trip to the nest no adult birds appeared.

On July 1 we made our first attempt to band the young but were unable to locate the nest due to a miscalculation in the terrain. I returned, however, on July 6 and this time located the site. When I reached the nest it was obvious that these nestlings were like none I had seen before. I took pictures for about five minutes and then started the descent, still wondering about the identity of the bird. My suspicions were shortly confirmed when one of the adult birds returned to feed the young. Seeing us, she flew to a nearby branch, where the identification mark—the brown throat patch—was clearly visible. To my knowledge this is the first record of this species nesting in Scott County.

The Swainson's Hawk has of recent years been more frequently reported in the Davenport area. Two of these observations may well have been breeding birds. In 1952 Morrissey, Feeney and Greer (*Iowa Bird Life*, XXII: 45) noted two birds at McCausland, Iowa, on April 14 and one on May 12. Another bird was seen by Pete Petersen, Jr., on June 11, 1955, at Cordova, Illinois.

Fall migration records include an immature male specimen preserved at the Davenport Public Museum, taken in October, 1955, 2 miles north of Davenport; and a sight record of an adult by A. Lang Baily near Walcott, Iowa, on September 30, 1956.—LEWIS BLEVINS, 2003 East 12th St., Davenport, Iowa.

Fall Picnic of Iowa Ornithologists' Union.—Members and friends of the Union met at George Wyth State Park, near Cedar Falls, on Sunday, September 30, 1956, as guests of the Cedar Falls Audubon Society. Areas of oak, walnut and locust, with heavy undergrowth of shrubs and non-woody plants, afforded fine retreats for migrants and resident birds. Bird-watching was interrupted only by hearty eating of the delicious potluck dinner. A short business meeting followed the picnic dinner. Short bird walks in and near the park provided a combined list of 45 species.

Since neither President Bruce Stiles nor Vice-President Lang Baily was present, the business meeting was called to order by Dr. J. Harold Ennis. Dr. George Hendrickson, chairman of the committee on revision of the field check-list, reported on the following points: 1) Names used shall be those which appear on the A.O.U. Check-list; 2) Due to the frequent reports of their occurrence, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Owl and Pine Grosbeak shall be included; 3) The size of the card shall be increased to 4x6 inches; 4) F. J. Pierce, Editor, and Myrle L. Burk, Secy.-Treas., shall arrange for the printing of the check-list; 5) J. Harold Ennis, F. J. Pierce and Myrle L. Burk shall edit the check-list. It was moved and seconded that the report be adopted.

Peter C. Petersen reported that there had not been much interest shown in having official arm bands made, so it was agreed to drop the matter. Appreciation to the Cedar Falls Audubon Society for their fine hospitality and very pleasant meeting was expressed by Dr. Ennis for the entire group. At the adjournment of the meeting many of those present accepted the invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Grant to come to their home in Cedar Falls for a further visit and luncheon.—MYRLE L. BURK.

Attendance Register.—AMES, Dr. and Mrs. Geo. Hendrickson; CEDAR FALLS, Verna Davis, Margaret Drawester, Agnes Faint, Dr. and Mrs. M. L. Grant, Inez Hilton, C. B. Madsen, Dina Madsen, Ruth Mahon, Mrs. Wm. Martin, Mr. and Mrs. John O'Connell, Mr. and Mrs. Oren Paine, Mrs. Russell Rugg, Elsie F. Smith, Elizabeth Wartman, George Worley; CEDAR RAPIDS, Lillian Serbousek, Pauline Wershofen; DAVENPORT, Peter Petersen, Jr.; MARION, Lucile Elson; MT. VERNON, Dr. J. H. Ennis; NORTHWOOD, Mrs. John Bottleman; RYAN, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pierce, Vicki and Sandra Pierce; WATERLOO, Dr. Myrle L. Burk, Earl Freeman, Helen Hawkins, R. M. Hays, Rodger Moon, Thomas Moon, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Mulvey, Pearl Rader, Dr. C. W. Robertson; WAVERLY, Victoria Madsen; WEBSTER CITY, Dennis Carter; WHITTIER, Larry, Nellie and Stanley Atherton; WINTHROP, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Pierce. Total registered, 47.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The "Yearbook" of the Des Moines Audubon Society for 1956-57 has been received by the Editor. It is attractively printed in offset, and contains the list of officers and members and a program of activities of the Society. A map of Polk County is included. It is marked with key numbers and the various groups of birds are keyed in so that members can tell where to look for the different birds. This useful key was worked out from the record sheets of bird migration as kept by the Society. The Des Moines Audubon Society has been in active existence since 1923. Its mimeographed journal, "The Warbler," is issued regularly and keeps the membership informed of field trips, travels of members, and a variety of other information.

"The Dickcissel," which we had not seen for a long time, was recently received. This is the mimeographed organ of the Sioux City Bird Club. The present number of 10 pages is designated as Vol. XIV, No. 3, November, 1956. Like "The Warbler" of Des Moines, it contains much local information, on the doings of the club members, the dates of Audubon Screen Tours, and notes on the interesting birds recently seen in the region.

WANTED—Peter C. Petersen, Jr., 620 East 30th St., Davenport, Iowa, needs these issues of Iowa Bird Life to complete his set: Vol. 3, nos. 2, 3; vol. 4, nos. 1,2,3,4; vol. 5, nos. 1, 2; vol. 7, nos. 1, 2, 3; vol. 11, no. 1; vol. 14, no. 1. Anyone having these issues please inform Mr. Petersen.

From Waterloo, Iowa, "Courier," issue of October 19, 1956: "Dr. Martin L. Grant, member of the Science Department faculty at Iowa State Teachers College, resumed his duties there Thursday after being off duty a couple of days while recovering from the bite of a gila monster, a poisonous lizard type common to Arizona. Dr. Grant was none the worse for his experience, which he believes demonstrated that the gila monster's bite is not fatal. But his bitten right hand was swollen for about two days.

"Dr. Grant was showing members of a Brownie troop through the college greenhouse museum section. He had handled the gila monster many times before, but apparently was not properly careful this time. A widespread search for an antidote by local physicians brought to light the fact that there is no known antidote for the gila monster's poison. Dr. Grant applied a tourniquet to his right arm after the accident, which prevented the poison from spreading."



DR. KOZICKY

Dr. Edward L. Kozicky, President of Iowa Ornithologists' Union 1953-54, severed his connection with the Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Ames early in October and moved with his family to East Alton, Illinois, where he took a position with Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation as Director of Conservation.

Dr. Kozicky was connected with the Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, while serving as leader of the Cooperative Wildlife Unit at Ames for the past eight years. Previous to this he had been associated for seven years with the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Pennsylvania State University. For six months in 1948, he was Wildlife Research Leader for the New Jersey Fish and Game Division. Well known as a conservationist and educator, Dr. Kozicky has been active in many

wildlife organizations and has done considerable writing on the subject. He is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, honorary scholastic fraternity, and Sigma Xi, honorary science research fraternity.

The Olin Mathieson Corporation manufactures sporting ammunition, and has pioneered in the field of conservation and the production of wildlife crops while recognizing the need for preservation of all our natural resources. One of Dr. Kozicky's chief responsibilities will be the direction of Nilo Farms, the corporation's demonstration area of controlled shooting at Brighton, Illinois.

Dr. Kozicky served faithfully as our President during his two years in office. Our associations with him were pleasant and profitable, and we are grateful for the time and work that he contributed to our organization. The best wishes of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union are extended to him in his new position.